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To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Microsoft will continue to be a monopoly as long as Microsoft Office remains a "closed" system. Office is "closed" in that its file formats are known only to Microsoft and are not available to the general public.

This is a barrier to entry because everybody uses Microsoft Office currently. The documents get e-mailed around within companies and between companies. Owning Office is required to read these documents fully, so therefore buying Office is a cost of doing business, like buying phones or a fax machine. (Except that you can get phones or a fax machine from multiple vendors.)

Microsoft's stranglehold on businesses in this regard would be reduced if:

1. In the short run, they were forced to publish the file formats and make them freely available.
2. In the long run, they should be forced to give up control of the file formats to a standards body, much like the W3C is a standards body for HTML and XML. Further, Microsoft should be forced to use the recommendations of the standards body as their file format, with fines levied if it is determined that they are "not fully compatible" with the standard. (Being partially compatible with HTML is a trick that Microsoft used to beat down Netscape.) They should be enjoined from shipping Office until the file formats are opened up.

This would be a reasonable solution, since Microsoft would retain their assets (Office), but at the same time, other companies could build products that are compatible with Office without having to pay "the Microsoft tax" in the form of licensing fees.

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